# COMMUNICATION

## WITH THE NEXT WORLD

The Right and the Wrong Methods

## A Text Book

*Given by*
WILLIAM T. STEAD
*From "Beyond the Veil"*

*Through*
MADAME HYVER

*Edited by*
ESTELLE W. STEAD

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# INTRODUCTION

THIS book is stated to contain a series of Messages given by my father, W. T. Stead, in 1914, two years after his death on the *Titanic*. To many this may seem a startling statement, and one which cannot be accepted without definite proof.

Personally I feel and know that I am in touch with my father and that he is the author of these Messages.

In this Introduction, I should like to give the reader proof that would leave him absolutely without doubt that communication is possible and that my father was able to give these Messages through Madame Hyver. Evidence other than that obtained through personal experience is hard to collect, and for my personal experience you have only my word. Nevertheless, I give it, with the other evidence I have been able to gather together, and if it does not convince the reader I shall be more than satisfied if it sets him on the road to investigation.

When I was in America in 1913 my father told me at a seance that he was in touch with a medium in France. From time to time in the years that followed he reminded me of this. In 1918 he told me very definitely at a public meeting of the W. T. Stead Bureau, when Mrs. Wricot was the medium, that he wanted me to bring out a book. When I questioned my ability to find the time for writing, he stated that I need not worry about that, for he would supply the material. He only wanted me to be ready to do what he wished with it when it came to hand.

I made a note of this, but heard nothing further until l was asked in January of this year, by Mr. Newall, of *The Weekly Despatch*, to look through some Messages purporting to be from my father. These Messages, he said, were given through a French medium. This fact at once naturally aroused my curiosity and interest. I spoke with my father at a sitting (for the Direct Voice) which Mrs. Osborne Leonard was holding that evening. He mentioned the Messages, and again reminded me that he had prepared me for their coming. Next day M. Victor, to whom the Messages had been sent from France, called on me and brought with him the bulk of them for my perusal. When I had read them I had little doubt that they were the Messages about which my father had spoken to me.

M. Victor, who is not a Spiritualist, though since reading these and other messages his interest in the question has been greatly stimulated, received the Messages through a relative for whom he had translated Magnussen's book, "God's Smile," into French. This relative, who is acquainted with Mme. Hyver,

reciprocated by sending these Messages to M. Victor. This was just about the time the Vale Owen Script was appearing in *The Weekly Despatch,* and it occurred to M. Victor that he might translate and publish the messages he had received from his relative. He did nothing, however, until one morning last September, when he states that he was awakened with a distinct command to translate the messages he had received. He had no idea who gave the command, but he was so impressed by it that he at once got into touch with Mme Hyver and obtained the necessary permission.

M. Victor did not feel justified in seeking publication for these Messages until he had obtained definite proof that they were indeed from my father. He was about to write to Madame Hyver on the subject when he received a communication from her stating that my father would give personal proof to him of the authenticity of the Messages if he would get into touch with some English mediums. M. Victor arranged for sittings with Mr. Peters and Mr. Vango, but told them nothing of the object of his visits. At both sittings my father spoke of the Messages and gave tests which convinced M. Victor. He gave additional proof by speaking of private family matters which could only be verified by me.

Mme Hyver is a highly gifted non-professional medium who has given her services to many of the foremost investigators in France. She first became aware of her power as a writing medium in 1888 at the age of nineteen. M. Leon Denis in "Dans L'Invisible Spiritisme et Mediumnite" writes in very high terms of the communications given through Mme Hyver's mediumship. "The messages she receives," he says, "are always of the very highest character and deal with high philosophical and moral questions."

In 1892 Mme Hyver came into touch with the Duchess de Pomar and sat for her regularly every week until the Duchess died two years later. Mme Hyver says that it was the Duchess who, from the Other Side, introduced my father and the group of Spirits working with him to a small circle she was holding with some friends at her home. This was in 1913, just at the time he told me he was in touch with a medium in France. The messages he gave at that time were short and without interest, and Mme Hyver did not keep them. "My belief," she says in a letter, "is that Stead was only training himself at that time." The Messages given in this book were received by Mme Hyver at intervals from May 5th, 1914, to February 1st, 1915.

In 1912 the following Message was received from my father a few weeks after his passing on:—

*When I see for myself the extraordinary difficulties in getting messages through from this side I marvel, not that we got so little but that we got as much as we did in our searchings when I was with you.*

*"For it is you, your conditions, which make the barrier. Preconceived ideas, sticking like wedges in your mind, preconceived prejudices and superstitions—all these must be hammered and battered down before the two worlds can realise that they are one and the same, and can combine to express that which more than ever I find to be the supreme purpose of all existence—the realisation of the Divine in the Human, by the Union of all who Love in the Service of all who Suffer.*

*"Let this be our motto still; and, God helping us, we will achieve mighty things and prove alike to laborious science—which questions sternly in search of knowledge—and to sorrowing humanity—which only asks for the sake of* LOVE—that there is no Death."

With these ideals before him, my father told me,* he gathered round him a group of spirits who realised that the barrier between the two worlds was not insurmountable, that it might be broken down if only they could teach people on earth the right methods of communication.

His next step was to choose the medium through whom to give their instructions. He chose a French woman who knew little about his life or personality, because in writing through those who knew him, or knew a good deal about him, there is a danger that the messages would be "coloured" by that knowledge. I do not feel that he has been able to get his style through to any great extent; but touches here and there and expressions now and again are typical of him. This was due to the fact that at times he was nearest to the guide, at other times one of the group in the background, and in the latter case the Message was couched in the language and tinged with the particular ideas of the transmitter close to the guide.

In some cases he said, the Messages were inspired by him personally, but in general the whole group concentrated their thoughts on the spirit guide of the medium and through him conveyed their message. His signature was given to all the Messages because the suggestion in the first place came from him, and it was he who was responsible for the selection of the medium.

I conclude with this Message, from my father, which I feel may help the investigator:—

*"Clinching proof can never come except the mind be caught at unawares. Why? Because the living self in the unseen must flash itself on the living self in the seen. What does this mean? That the screen of the conscious mind must be bare of images, so that the active mind in the unseen can throw its images an to a clear surface, as on to a mirror which reflects only the objects it is desired to portray. While the conscious mind incarnate is*

* By means of automatic writing.

*active, it is busily picturing what it desires or others may desire. The screen of the mind is full of these thought images and the images received from us are blotted and indistinct, confused and dimmed. Never come to seek advice or help along any particular lines; it is foredoomed to failure for the reasons given. We know what is required and will always respond when possible. Commune with us for the love of communion, and all other things that love can dictate and circumstances will permit shall be added thereto.*—W. T. STEAD.

ESTELLE W. STEAD.

*July,* 1921.

## FOREWORD TO THE MESSAGES

By W. T. STEAD

IF these Messages are given out to the public they may give rise to many protests, especially among Spiritualists. People will think I am very severe in my criticisms, little encouraging for mediums, and scarcely inspiriting on the subject of the happiness of spirit life. That does not disturb me, for if they are read and discussed, these Messages will be of great benefit in making people reflect. There is nothing like meeting people who are not of your opinion—it makes you progress.

Although, on earth, I carried out many experiments in psychical research and read extensively on the subject, seeking to grasp the possibilities of Spiritualism, I find that I was ignorant and prejudiced and have still much to learn.

I do not tell you very much, but I do say that Spiritualism is not a game and mediumship has great dangers. All who come to Spiritualism to amuse themselves, to dominate others, or to draw illicit profit from poor dupes, expose themselves to grievous reprisals.

People who experiment ought to do so in a religious and scientific spirit. Their methods ought to be strict and the control rigorous. That is the only way to avoid the deep ruts into which the wheels of the car of Spiritualism are sinking.

## CHAPTER I.

## SPIRITS AND MEDIUMS

IT is as difficult for spirits to come back to earth as it is for you to penetrate into the realms of the spirits.

We have no longer the faculty of living in the physical substance. It evades us, just as the substances of the superior planes evade you.

We have impressions and sensations analogous to yours—but so different. We have lights, colours, and sounds; but these only distantly resemble those which you know as such. We have needs which remind us of thirst, of hunger, and of sleep, but which are more needs of the intelligence than of the body.

In spite of all our desires to respond to Your appeals, we are often prevented from doing as we are expected, because of the differences of the planes.

I will even say that it is often more easy for you to come to US than for us to come to you. Sleep permits you to enter into touch with us a thousand times better than can all the mediums in the world, and the help we are able to give you in this way is often more precise and efficacious.

### *Man's Spiritual Faculties*

Mediums are really only mediocre interpreters for the spirits, a casual means by which they are obliged to help themselves while awaiting something better—that is to say, until the spiritual senses which ought to complete the physical senses have further developed themselves in human beings. It is abnormal that the deceased should have to come back to the physical, as they are obliged to when manifesting themselves to you. The souls of the dead, excepting in the first period that follows death, have nothing to do with earth directly, as their spiritual evolution draws them far away from that lower circle where humanity struggles.

It is man who ought to go to the spirits by developing in himself his spiritual faculties. You are all capable of this development. You have embryos of spiritual faculties whose actions result in intuitions, inspirations, and impulses, the origin of which you do not know how to trace, for you immerse yourself in your physical body, you live only for it, and you do not often take notice of your soul.

You act and think as if you would be physical men for ever,

and very seldom as if you were and would continue to be spirits, but you are always spirits, even while you are in your physical bodies. Your soul would be more responsive if you occupied yourself more with it, and the dead would manifest themselves better to you.

*How Messages Are Effected*

To come back to the mediums. They are at the best a mediocre means of correspondence. The thoughts transmitted to them are embarrassed by the weight of their physical bodies and deformed by the resistance of their brains. They are in danger of malevolent spirits, and the more intelligent and malevolent the spirit is, the greater the danger.

Looking entirely away from the dangers and considering only the messages, one finds that these are very often distorted while passing through the intermediary of a medium.

If the spirit manifesting himself wants to explain certain facts of a complicated nature—as, for instance, the spiritual constitution of man—and if he wants to develop ideas which are not yet generally accepted by people, he will encounter insurmountable obstacles, and the message will be insufficient and mutilated. As regards style, the greatest writer will only get banal wordings from a medium without culture.

There are terrible obstacles to overcome when we must use a strange body as intermediary *(as when the medium is in a trance).* Very often it happens that we partly lose some of our faculties and are in torture when expressing an idea which, in the guise it is given later by the medium, we fail to recognise, or recognise only slightly.

It is not our fault, or the medium's, if the terrestrial personality chokes and embarrasses us.

*Auras of Mediums*

I shall try to tell you about the auras of mediums. You know that it is the radiation of their fluids that is given the name "aura."* The quality of the aura differs greatly in different persons. Some auras have a radiance which is very powerful, reaches very far, and protects the medium, as if he were within

* Precisely what the aura is it is still beyond the power of our science to say, though investigations now in progress promise considerably to extend our knowledge. In psychic research the aura is spoken of as an effluence or radiation from the soul, or psychic body. Here is a Century Dictionary definition: "An imponderable substance supposed to emanate from all living things, to consist of the subtle essence of the individual, and to be a means of manifesting what is called animal magnetism, and also a medium for the operation of alleged mesmeric, clairvoyant, and somnambulic powers."

a shell. In such cases it is difficult for spirits to reach the medium. When they approach they are repulsed as if by an electric current. They cannot take possession of the medium and are forced to set to work in a roundabout way.

You know that if there are two pianos in the same room tuned alike and you touch a key on one piano, the same string in the second piano vibrates in harmony with the first. So, in the case of a far-reaching aura, the spirit's fluids must be put in accord with the medium's, in order to cause the medium's fluid to vibrate in sympathy with his.

If the medium is very sensitive and the spirit is capable, good and sometimes excellent results will be obtained. This is the case with "intuitive" or indirect mediumship. I call it "indirect" because the spirit cannot take possession of the medium, but must work at some distance from him. It is due to this fact that "intuitively" received communications, though longer, more developed, and often more elevated, are less precise than those received through a "direct" medium.

Not many facts, as distinct from ideas, are conveyed through mediums of this type. Vibrations of facts, such as names and dates, have not the same nature as the vibrations transmitting a moral or a metaphysical thought. They are on a more material plane, and are of too short a wavelength to reach the sensitive centre of a medium who has a powerful aura. In "intuitive" communications the spirit remains far from the medium, at the outer end of his radiations, so that only the vibrations that are sufficiently long can reach the medium's mind.

"Intuitive" mediums are not in touch with inferior spirits. They can only communicate with sufficiently advanced spirits. Their aura, or protecting shell, is not easily penetrated.

*Penetrating the Shell*

Mediums whose auras are easily penetrated attract more spirits, and the more permeable their auras, the more precise will be the manifestations given. If a spirit is able to enter entirely within the aura of a medium, he can recall to his listeners the most exact facts about his existence on earth, for he is the incontestable master of the organs of the medium. He can take full control of the medium's body during complete trance and partial control in semi-trance, when the medium remains conscious.

Generally the aura can only be penetrated at one point. For instance, the automatic writer, who can be made to set down messages in a language unknown to him, cannot see the visions given to the clairvoyant or hear the words spoken to the clairaudient.

A certain quantity of etheric fluid* is taken from the physical body for the moving of objects, the rapping of tables, etc. If the aura of the medium is easily penetrated, the phenomena will be of an intelligent kind; if the aura is difficult to influence, the movements effected will be without much intelligence.

At present the medium whose aura can be penetrated by spirits is exposed to many dangers, for the door is open to all sorts of influences, and if his will is feeble or his morality dubious, he will become the prey of roving malevolent spirits. For that matter, one may be a victim without going to seances. Many people have easily penetrated auras and they are influenced by entities who are attracted to them by their unstable wills and their bad thoughts.

*High Moral Standard Best Protection*

The two great classes of mediums—the indirect ("intuitive"), and the direct (those through whom more material effects are produced)—fall into divisions and sub-divisions, according to the nature of their fluids and the quality of their minds.

Mrs. Piper†, for example, a medium whose aura was admirably permeable, had at the same time a high moral standard and a well-developed intelligence; she was therefore unharmed by malevolent spirits. Others, whose auras are less permeable than hers, are a prey to terrible influences because their wills are feeble and their morals bad.

When a medium has an aura that can be penetrated, spirits are able to enter into his psychic being, with ease or with difficulty according to the degree of affinity between the spirit and the medium.

A spirit of elevated character cannot approach a very

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* Etheric fluid apparently means the "plasma," or psychic form of matter, described by Dr. Crawford, of Belfast, in his book, "The Psychic Structures at the Goligher Circle," and by Dr. Gustave Goley, a French scientist, in "From the Unconscious to the Conscious." This substance, it is stated, while remaining invisible to ordinary sight, can sometimes be touched, and has been photographed (reproductions in Dr. Crawford's book) and also weighed. It is that by which, according to Dr. Crawford, under certain conditions objects can be moved about without the cause being visible to the watchers.

† Mrs. Piper was the medium at a great number of sittings conducted between 1887 and 1911 by members of the British and American Societies for Psychical Research—among the investigators being Sir Oliver Lodge, Professor William James, and Professor Romaine Newbold. Records of these sittings occupy the whole of volume 28 and part of volumes 6, 7, 13, 14, 15, 16, 22, 23 and 24 of the PROCEEDINGS of the British Society for Psychical Research. It was agreed, after exhaustive tests had been made, that her loss of normal consciousness while in trance was complete, and that when awake she remembered nothing of what had occurred in the trance state. She is still alive, but her trance mediumship came to an end in 1911.

material medium without suffering as if from asphyxiation, sometimes nearly to the extent of becoming unconscious; but with the same medium a coarse spirit would be quite at his ease. On the other hand, with a medium of a more refined type, the coarse spirit would feel as would a peasant in a drawing-room: he would not know how to act.

Some mediums have fluids which are in harmony with only one category of spirits and can only produce phenomena when working with that category. Others have adaptable fluids and can enter into communications with many kinds of spirit entities.

## CHAPTER II

## DIFFERENT WAYS OF COMMUNICATING

TAKE, for instance, this present experience. You (Mme J. Hyver, see Introduction) through whom these Messages are given, are an "intuitive" medium. I communicate with you by the intermediary of your spiritual self—as one intelligence to another.

I do not transmit words. I speak to you in the language of spirits: that is to say, I think, and the vibrations of my thoughts are transmitted by the intermediary of our spirit bodies. Your spirit body then gives consciousness of my thoughts to your brain and you translate these thoughts into corresponding written expressions.

I would be able to convey very complicated and subtle thoughts to you so long as you had in your mind words adequate for the expression of these ideas; but I could not convey through you an algebraic formula or a scientific or historical term which you did not know. If, for example, you knew the name Nebuchadnezzar, I could make you write: "The pride of a Nebuchadnezzar." If you did not know the name, you would write "The pride of a great potentate," or something equivalent. The idea would be the same.

I could not convey to you a fact of my past life or a definite fore-knowledge of future happenings, as these are facts and not ideas. In order to transmit such facts I must act on the physical brain of a "direct" medium.

But I can cause you, as an indirect, or "intuitive" medium, to express such sentiments as joy, fear, tenderness and love, because these sentiments are movements of my soul which can make your soul vibrate in unity with mine.

### *Inspiration and Style*

If an "intuitive" medium is of only mediocre sensitiveness, all that he writes will be in a uniform style. If he is very sensitive he will be able to reproduce the style and the personality of the spirit who transmits the thoughts. It is with a medium as with a musician. Anyone taught to use a piano can play a piece by Beethoven in some sort of way; but a real musician will interpret Beethoven otherwise than by reproducing mechanically the notes

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* The indirect, or "intuitive," is that by which thoughts are transmitted from a distance without the senses of sight, hearing, or touch being employed.

of that piece—he will seek to put into his performance the soul of the composer and the expression peculiar to his genius.

Further, in the "intuitive" medium the faculty you call "inspiration" is set in motion. He is in the state of an inspired composer who hears the sublime harmonies of the celestial spheres; of the poet who hears mysterious voices breathe to him his rhythms; of the painter and the sculptor who feel themselves sustained and uplifted by a force whose source they do not know; of the savant who sees the secrets of the universe unfold before him.

*Answers to Silly Questions*

As soon as a medium is seen to cover sheets of paper with ease people suppose they have only to put questions to him, no matter how disconnected or ridiculous these may be, to get answers. They imagine that he can get into touch with any and every spirit, that no subject is beyond him, and that he can give money-making hints in business affairs. If he fails to meet these varied requirements, people deny that he is a medium and ascribe what he has written to his imagination. This is false and unjust.

An "intuitive" medium, even an excellent one, can give only one category of phenomena. He may be excellent for metaphysics, but inapt for music. He may feet a vibration arrive, his spiritual being may be conscious of it, but the vibration remains without form; it creates no image in his mind.

Good "intuitive" mediums are very rare—that is why the greater part of the messages received from spirits are banal in form and matter when written out. A medium must be highly sensitive and predisposed to the spiritual before he can receive the echoes of the spirit world. It is equally necessary that experimenters should not ask him to try to obtain phenomena which he is not adapted to transmit and that he be left to his specialty. Then messages of great value may be obtained.

The great benefit of the purely "intuitive" faculty in a medium is that a spirit who seeks to communicate by means of it is left free from earth trammels. Not having to enter within the aura of the medium, he remains in his spiritual sphere and his thoughts flow easily, not being circumscribed by earth conditions.

*Your Ideas and Ours*

A spirit does not live like a man, and his life is so different from the earthly life that it is as impossible for us to give you an idea of it as it is for a swallow to make a Carp understand its sensations. You are, as it were, the carp, and you always wish us to reply as carp. You desire us still to interest ourselves in our old earthly form and our actions and thoughts while on earth,

and in your actions, thoughts and your future, and in all those earthly things that we have difficulty in remembering and which appear to us of no concern and even miserably petty.

Happiness and sorrow on earth do not resemble the happiness and sorrow of the other world. Things which delight or afflict you seem to us altogether paltry and childish. It is for this reason that we are sometimes apt to appear not so interested and sympathetic as you would expect.

We feel keenly the affection you have for us and all the elevated and pure thoughts which are in your minds and which are of the spiritual domain.

We can see symbolically the dangers that threaten you, by the luminosities that surround you, and can give you the hope of a success or the warning of a trial to come. It is more difficult for us to see exact facts. We can help you, but not always in the way that you imagine.

When you ask us for so many earthly things with which we are no longer in contact, it costs us a great effort to communicate with you.

To enable us to give you advice of this sort, it is necessary to use a "direct" medium, and it is improbable that the result will be satisfactory.

There are innumerable things to tell about the spirits and the different states of human consciousness. Men know almost nothing of the great laws that govern their lives, and all except a small number of the "dead" are as ignorant as are men on earth. That is why so many seances are disappointing and so much of the phenomena apparently valueless.

You must have patience to listen to me still. I thank you for having written so long. You are undergoing great fatigue, despite the apparent ease of the writing.

When the surrounding conditions are defective, or if one tries to do too much, all mediumship is a cause of fatigue and occasionally of danger. Experimenters should bear that in mind when with a medium, for in many cases spirits are not able to succour the medium.

*Fate After Death*

I regret to disillusion many people who imagine that the entire spirit world is a resplendent replica of the earth. This is not the case. The first stage only of astral life bears a resemblance to the earth, and this stage is for many one of gloom, distress and suffering.

Those whose souls are little developed, who have not any spirituality nor any idea of the after-life, are in twilight; the wicked are in darkness and pain; the mediocre have a mediocre

existence, copied after that of earth. When they free themselves from the earth and from the lower astral world, the nobler and more developed souls have a life of thought and feeling which surpasses in delight anything you can imagine.

Many cannot attain to knowledge of that state. They are like the souls of whom Homer speaks, who whirl about in Hades as do dead leaves before the winds of autumn. These innumerable souls, not having physical bodies and being no longer able to gratify the passions nor satisfy the needs which they imagine they have, are filled with longings for their former earth life. Still being incapable of sustained thought, they are unable to conceive either a life of intelligence or one devoid of egoism.

There is, therefore, in the atmosphere of earth an innumerable crowd of wandering and desolate souls who watch for any light on earth (the light of a spiritual psychic) and who rush in whirling throngs to the spot where a possibility of manifesting themselves occurs.

*How Communication Is Effected*

A spirit in pain will communicate feebly, he will be weak and incoherent. When communicating he will suffer in mind and body and the medium will suffer also. He will always be fatiguing and often harmful to the medium.

A spirit fairly happy on the astral plane will communicate more easily. He will be able to interest himself in your affairs and earth affairs generally. His power to do this will be in proportion to the degree to which his intellectual faculties have been developed or restricted during earth life. For instance, your grandfather may have been a worthy and affectionate workman, of a good moral standard, but with an intellect undeveloped either by his occupation or his reading. He would be able to aid you in your career, but only as far as his grasp and restricted ideas of ordinary life would permit him.

But your father, if he had been instructed in some science or art and had become both cultured and intellectual, would interest himself less in the material things of your existence. He might love you, but his cultivated intelligence would lead him towards the spiritual and away from the material. He would not follow your career, as far as material success is concerned, but he would seek to aid your inner development

Your grandfather would influence someone to assist you with money at a difficult moment, whilst your father would inspire you with the idea of an invention or of a discovery in science.

I have Strayed far from the subject of the "intuitive" medium. I think, however, what I have said will be useful.

*Drowning Feeling Revived*

Communication by means of an "intuitive" medium allows the spirit to remain in his own sphere, and thus does not awaken vividly the recollections of his life on earth. His memories of earth are very clearly and even painfully revived when he first tries to communicate through a "direct" medium. For the purpose of manifesting, I have often tried to take possession of a "direct" medium by penetrating within his aura. The first contact revived in me the impressions of my death by drowning—the feeling of suffocation. I knew very well that I was only entering into contact with a medium, nevertheless the last sensations of my physical life recurred with force for several moments.

If the medium is clairvoyant I try to show myself to him. The vision may take the aspect of reality or only a vague form, according to the degree of my power and of our affinity, and according to whether the surroundings are favourable or otherwise.

If I have still my last astral body,* I shall be able to make that body visible to the medium and the manifestation will be more easy for me. If I have left my astral form, and if I have only my spiritual body, which is in reality my true self, I shall be obliged to construct an image of my old earth body. I must show myself in a more or less luminous form if I am not able to construct such an image.

If the medium is clairvoyant only, and I wish to give proofs of my presence, I must create pictures of objects, write words or dates in luminous letters, and give as it were photographs of past and future events.

* The meaning of this expression may be gained from this passage from the Vale Owen script (Arnel's message, published Dec. 5th, 1920): "On the planet Earth the substance of which our environment is made is frankly material. In the region next in order above earth it is less material and more ethereal; then it is ethereal; then more spiritual than ethereal; then ethereal; then spiritual; and then spiritual but more sublime." The stages called "astral" in these Messages are apparently those lying between our material earth conditions and those purely spiritual; that is, the ethereal.

## CHAPTER III

## NECESSARY CONDITIONS

VERY often those present at a seance stop the production of phenomena by desiring it too ardently. For instance, a friend will say to me: "Show me the thing I gave you on such-and-such an occasion." If he wishes too strongly that I show this thing (say, a tie-pin), there are ten chance to one that I shall not be able to satisfy him. I am within the aura of the medium and his will vibrates across the aura and drives apart the fluids I am manipulating.

An essential condition for a good manifestation is that those present at the sitting should be calm. Ardent desires, great sorrows, restless minds, are causes of failure. That is why you French people are less successful at seances than the British. You come with all sorts of notions quite foreign to the purpose of a sitting. Even if a fly buzzes past you your attention is distracted, and if the expected phenomenon is not at once produced you become impatient or perhaps give up trying. You are also always very ready to jeer at spirits or mediums.

No one should make a mock of the phenomena, for to produce them often costs great effort and sometimes distress. Spirits, in seeking to produce them, work on a surface even more mobile than water, a surface that the slightest breath agitates. You know that a lake, which reflects the surrounding objects like a mirror when the water is calm, only presents confused and broken reflections when the surface is shivered by the lightest of breezes.

Agitation among those present at a seance may partially or totally prevent a manifestation from taking place—by agitation I mean not only restlessness of the body, but of the mind. A man may to all appearances be very tranquil, yet he may stir a tempest in his mind by thinking of some matter that troubles him, or of someone whom he dislikes, and this agitation will be transmitted magnetically to his neighbours. Then in place of having a calm and receptive surface on which to produce his manifestation, the spirit will be tossed about like a wreckage on the sea.

*In Anothers Body*

To return to the subject of mediumship. Given good conditions I can communicate with the clairvoyant by means of pictures or other symbols, I can exchange short phrases with the clairaudient and with the good writer I can give fairly direct and complete messages.

I could give remarkably clear proofs of my identity by taking possession of a medium's body. For this I should use a medium of the "direct" type, Mrs. Piper, for example.

I could cause others who were very mechanical to write in languages of which they were ignorant, others to deliver discourses, others to draw or paint. The result depends entirely upon the extent to which I am able to control the medium.

Many who remain conscious during manifestations are excellent mediums, and by means of them convincing phenomena are produced. These manifestations, however, are seldom as clear as those obtained by means of a medium who surrenders his personality in a complete trance.

In cases of the complete trance of a highly developed medium, a discarnate spirit may, after exercising and testing his powers for a little while, become almost entirely his earth self again. At first this taking possession of a strange body is an extraordinary experience for him. To feel that he is really himself in another's body; to see with eyes that have not precisely the same kind of sight that his had; to hear with ears that receive sounds differently from what his own did; to think with a brain to which he is not accustomed—this is at first grotesque.

Little by little he becomes accustomed to the strange body. He tries to act and to speak, but the effort required is very great. It is hard to move this unfamiliar body and express himself by means of it especially if the machine he is controlling is only mediocre.

Even with an excellent medium the situation is difficult. We are obliged to make preparations in advance, and after the manifestation we are exhausted.

We require a certain amount of courage and of endurance to reach you, even if we have become accustomed to the medium. However, when we have been able to control a medium effectively and to give convincing proofs of our reality, we are well repaid for our efforts.

*Things Not To Ask*

Unhappily, our efforts are not sufficiently supported by people on earth. You think of us still in earth terms and look on us too much from your individual point of view.

After establishing the fact of our survival, you ask us to put you in the way of good fortune or to be genii, who, with a touch of a magic ring will transform your griefs and troubles to joys. This is a wrong attitude and because of it many seances are upset.

It is a mistake to harass the spirits with your ordinary affairs. If they are able to do something for you they will, but if you ask them for things without rhyme or reason you risk hindering them in their evolution.

It is not always good for spirits to be in touch with earth conditions and, therefore, it is not right to make repeated demands for any spirit. If you persist in doing so you may cause the one you seek to deviate from his proper path, or, if he cannot respond, some entity may appear in his place and cause you much trouble.

All this does not prevent aid being given you at need from the spirit regions. A warning spontaneously sent you is of value; it is given when it will be useful. Those you love will know well how to aid you, but it is possible that the one to whom you appeal is not available, and in that case do not insist in your appeals.

*Spoiling Fine Gifts*

Many seances are spoiled by the egoism of those present. There are some people who do not try to perfect the means of communication between the two worlds, but play games with the spirits or put a thousand puerile and stupid questions that they would be ashamed to put to a friend. Seances are not only unsatisfactory when these tricks are played, but the development of the medium is retarded, the finest gifts spoiled and the most precious faculties remain undeveloped.

You must not imagine that the results obtained at a seance depend entirely on the spirits. They can only use the material that is offered them by the medium and his group. As soon as a spirit gets into direct touch with a medium he is in touch also with all the members of the group, and has to reckon with the influences that each one, unknown to himself, brings with him.

The group should meet regularly at a fixed time, and if possible at the home of one who has studied the subject and considers communications to be desirable. A seance held under these conditions is more likely to produce good results than one that is held at irregular times and under unfavourable conditions

The persons composing a group should be in harmony one with another. They should be of good moral character, for an ill-natured person, with evil thoughts, causes disorder at a sitting and attracts spirits who may inflict damage in many ways. A certain amount of culture is necessary, as the communications do not rise above the commonplace in groups lacking an intellectual element.

*What We Look Like to Spirits*

Spirits who are manifesting themselves on earth do not see a room and the people in it as you see them. The limitation of walls is unknown to them and they see the furniture, pictures, and knick-knacks in their spiritual aspect and not in their material form.

In the room in which you are now writing there are some art productions. They do not bear the aspect of wood, copper, porcelain, bronze, and painted canvas to me. I see in them only the ideas the artist had in producing them. Thus I see that charming Chinese plaque not as a piece of skilfully coloured porcelain, but as a harmonious rhythm.

The people in this room do not appear to me as flesh and bone but as mind and spirit. Magnetic waves, thoughts and feelings vibrate from them. They are beautiful or ugly, brilliant or dull, or of intermediate degree, according to their state of soul. Health to some extent determines the strength of the vibrations.

If the dominating thoughts of people at a sitting are healthy, pure, and devoid of egoism, they harmonise and produce excellent conditions for psychic experiments. The conditions become disturbed and unstable if there is a discordant element in the group.

## CHAPTER IV

## PROBLEMS AT SEANCES

A SPIRIT who wishes to give a message is in some ways to be compared with a speaker at a public meeting. In addressing a meeting the speaker has first to gain the close attention of his audience. Similarly, a spirit must first obtain control of the medium through whom he wishes to communicate. As" the speaker, to be successful, must establish a sort of magnetic chain between himself and his audience, so a spirit must forge a similar link between himself and the members of the group, if he wishes to give an accurate and intelligible message.

Owing to the difficulties arising from the presence of a crowd of uneasy spirits, it is not always easy to maintain the needed harmony of thought among a company at a sitting.

As soon as a seance begins, numbers of unhappy spirits crowd round in the hope of finding some relief for themselves. These poor beings are in the desolate state owing to their ignorance or ill-will, and if no kindly thought of a friend reaches them, if no one recognises them, they rove restlessly about until slowly, very slowly it may be, the mists around them are dispersed. If the medium had not a guide to protect him and divert from him the torrent of beings who wish to speak, it would be almost impossible to effect a manifestation and the medium would be overwhelmed.

Prayer helps the guide to attract the spirit who is called, and, if he can come, to help him to manifest, but often the fight is hard, the victory dearly won. It is not always the best and most capable who win. Sometimes the most incoherent and ill-disposed hold on the more firmly, because in securing contact with a medium, they feel renewed in them the powers of physical life which they long for, and of which death has deprived them. Such conflicts explain why at many seances the results are poor and sometimes nil.

In a well-organised group in which the members are regular in attendance, in agreement on their main aim and bent on making a thorough study of the conditions, an atmosphere is created which enables the guide to clear a circle around them into which disturbing spirits cannot penetrate. The guide has repeatedly to re-create the circle in a group where the harmonious conditions are broken either by a continually changing membership or an uncertainty of time and place of meeting.

Highly intelligent mediums with powerful auras are less

exposed to the intrusions of wandering Spirits, but a medium with a weak will and a feeble aura easily becomes a prey to unhappy or malevolent ones. A medium must live a strict life, must discipline his thoughts and cultivate his will-power, in order to be free from the danger of obsessions.

*Semblance of Earth Body.*

The most exacting form of mediumship is that through which materialisations are effected, for the phenomena are produced by utilising the etheric body of the medium.

You know that the etheric body, which is the exact double of the physical body, is composed of very tenuous particles of imponderable substance in a fluid state. The manipulation of this substance by spirits or experiments is accompanied by considerable risk.

When a medium is put into a state of trance it is possible to disengage the etheric from the physical body. A spirit can use this body to show himself in tangible form. He draws off not only the etheric body, but also caloric, electric and gaseous elements. He combines these with magnetic emanations from other people present at a sitting in order to give a more or less complete semblance of ordinary life to the form which he creates. To do this without risk to the medium a spirit must be experienced and capable.

Many factors have to be reckoned with at these manifestations, and among them is the dissolvent action of certain phenomena, such as rays of light. Special care should be taken of the medium. He should be isolated in an enclosed space propitious for the concentration of the fluids to be manipulated. He should not be touched or startled.

Materialising mediums should be subjected to a rigorous discipline to safeguard them from physical and moral danger. As it is, they often work with most discordant groups and under clumsy, ignorant, and even ill-intentioned direction. Lapses are a natural consequence, and many famed for materialising power have paid dearly for their faculty.

Such manifestations as I have described are not desirable, at least in the conditions prevailing at present.* They are risky and, after all, do not give you much of value.

*The Theory of Telepathy*

Manifestations obtained through mediums of the type of Mrs. Piper† (in which a spirit speaks by means of the vocal cords of the medium, then unconscious, or uses her hand to write) are, in my opinion, better than appearances in visible form. Such

* These messages were given during the war. † See Note page 10.

manifestations are less risky, more easily controlled, and more instructive to sitters, on account of the amount of information that can be given regarding the next life.

Many critics deny that phenomena of this type are caused by spirits. They attribute what is said, written or done either to suggestion (thought transference) between a medium and the others present at a sitting, or to the action of the subconscious mind.

The phenomenon of suggestion* can occur and does occur, but much more rarely than people imagine. Everyone who has attended sittings knows that it is difficult to obtain through a medium a name, a date, or a clear and exact statement of facts (not ideas), even though these facts may be well known to the questioner and he may be in Close touch with the medium.

This phenomena of suggestion, which is easily produced when one man sends another to sleep (or hypnotises him) is not easily produced between two persons awake and alert, or between a medium in a trance and a member of the company, unless the member has himself induced the trance. A strong unspoken desire in the mind of a sitter often prevents the wished-for name, or date, or other fact from being given.

*Subconscious Action*

So much for suggestion. There remains the question raised by critics, as to the action of the sub-conscious mind.

The "sub-conscious" is all that great reservoir of experience and knowledge contained in the entire memory of an individual, as distinguished from that fragmentary memory on which he can draw at any moment.

A man, partly withdrawn from the influences of his physical body by the action of magnetic passes, exhibits more extended faculties than be possesses in a normal state. Every medium has a sub-conscious mind of wider intelligence than his conscious mind, and the same is true of the people sitting with him.

What, then, at a sitting, is the action of the normally unknown faculties?

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* The process of thought-transference between human minds or brains is nowadays called "telepathy," although that term is not used in these messages. The word is defined to mean: "The communication of impressions of any kind from one mind to another, independently of the recognised channels of sense"—that is, without speech, writing, glances (however faintly significative), changes of expressions, or the making of any sign, however trivial or obscure. Telepathy may take place between two persons in the same room or between one in Britain and one on the other side of the globe. If a man in London were suddenly and unaccountably alarmed about a friend in San Francisco and some time afterwards found that the friend had been at that moment in trouble and had been thinking of him, his sudden alarm would be supposed to be due to thought-transference, or telepathy.

This action depends greatly on the kind of medium who is at work and on the quality of the intellect of the others present.

Mediums whose powers are of a physical or semi-physical kind (those by whom "direct" manifestations such as table-rapping, visible appearances, automatic writing, etc., are obtained) are little influenced by their own sub-conscious mind or that of others who may be present. An "intuitive" medium may be much more influenced, because the longer rays of his aura may more easily touch the spirit bodies of those present with him, and so cause his own spirit body to act in a way unknown to his normal consciousness.

The degree of culture, or conscious intelligence, possessed by a medium has also to be considered. An uneducated or dull medium does not lend himself to the action of the sub-conscious, but a well-informed medium with a subtle mind is qualified to get into touch, in certain circumstances, though not regularly, with his own hidden mentality or that of the company sitting with him.

A very good "intuitive" medium to whom a question is put at a sitting may give an adequate reply. This reply may be due to (1) the influence of a person who has passed from the earth-life; (2) his own sub-conscious mind; (3) the sub-conscious mind of someone present, who may himself have no idea of the effect he is producing; (4) the thoughts which are, as it were, floating about in the air.

If it is by his own sub-conscious mind that he is influenced he will not feel near him the presence of some entity distinct from his own personality, and what he writes will not have that stamp of individual distinction peculiar to the mind of the one whose message he is supposed to be conveying.

If what he writes is only a reflection of the thoughts of people sitting with him—say after they have been discussing some subject together—the "message" will be confused in form and matter and inferior in quality to that which he ordinarily conveys.

There are few mediums with an aura sufficiently far-reaching to enter into touch with the sub-conscious minds of those near them. To draw upon his own sub-conscious mind a medium must be in a rather unusual state, not often nor easily reached. Therefore, highly interesting though the subject is in relation to the spiritual life which is in and around us, you must not exaggerate the part played by the sub-conscious mind.

*Some Kinds of Phenomena*

There are people who decline to see spirits anywhere, and others who see them everywhere.

Certain phenomena at seances are not always attributable to spirit agency. Amongst these may be mentioned:—

(1) Phenomena of a purely fluidic order (moving of objects, raps, and so on) in which it is possible to employ only the magnetic force emanating from the medium or others present.

(2) Manifestations due to the sub-conscious mind of the medium which, partially disengaged, penetrates into the world beyond. (Visions of distant scenes, prevision, answers to moral and philosophic questions.)

(3) Manifestations transmitted by the sub-conscious mind of someone present at a sitting.

There are in the spirit world other inhabitants in addition to the spirits of men who have passed from earth. Elementals* and thought-forms are in this category. Many who have passed over from earth deny the existence of these entities, because they have never seen them. That they have not is true, as elementals manifest themselves rarely to men during the earth-life or afterwards.

These elementals none the less play a part in many phenomena. They are indispensable for the effecting of physical phenomena (materialisations, liftings). That is why there is an element of risk in these manifestations. The great medium Home† could have told many things about these beings, which he had to dominate in order to produce the remarkable phenomena with which he was concerned.

*Fantasies About Celebrities*

A certain number of cases of obsession are due to the spirits of the "dead," but many more to elementals imprudently invoked by experiments or thought-forms created by the constant repetition of fixed ideas.

You do not realise how much power thought has. For instance, if every day you evoke the same imaginary person in your thoughts—say, a D'Artagnan or a Hamlet—you will in time construct a D'Artagnan or a Hamlet in a fluidic state. If you persist in your fantasy, you will create a sort of fluidic automaton, which can manifest itself through clairvoyance, writing and table rapping, and mediums will be able to describe a person conformable to the idea you have in your mind. The more you repeat the experiment the more you will vitalise that image, though the thought-manifestations of it will be mediocre.

There are many individuals and groups who, in all good faith, imagine they have for guides such celebrities as Voltaire, St.

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* Nature-spirits.

† D. D. Home (1833-86) was said to have the power of floating in air. Many of his displays took place in London; Lord Dunraven described in the *Weekly Despatch* of March 21st, 1920, how he had seen Home go out, head first, body nearly horizontal, through an open window on the third floor at Ashley House, Ashley Place, and return to the room feet foremost.

Vincent de Paul, loan of Arc, or Napoleon, and that the owners of these names follow them step by step, responding to them immediately they take to the planchette or the table! They have set a trap for themselves, for they are only in contact with some trickster on the "other side," or with the image-automaton they have themselves created. If nothing else showed this, it would be proved by the inanity of the messages received.

This is a frequent form of obsession. We spirits see very clearly the image-automaton attached by a fluidic bond to its creator and drawing its vitality from him. We see that, when he ceases to turn his thoughts constantly to it, it gradually dissolves and disappears.

One might call these creations spirit polypi, because they draw life from the fluidic (or etheric) bodies of men, just as the polypus grows at the expense of the flesh of the organic body.

## CHAPTER V

## WHAT TO DO AND WHAT NOT TO DO WITH MEDIUMS

PEOPLE who seek to witness phenomena at Seances often do not trouble to consider exactly what the faculty of mediumship is.

A medium is a person with a special sensitiveness that puts him in touch with ordinarily invisible forces. The ordinary man who is of sound physique does not possess this sensitiveness, neither is he likely to do so until the average human standard has attained a different level.

Lombroso, the Italian scientist-investigator of the abnormal, saw clearly that there were analogies in the cerebral functioning of genius and madness—to these I would add mediumship. I do not mean that a medium is mad, or that a Shakespeare is mad, but that the medium, the man of genius and the madman owe their special state to the extra activity of certain cerebral centres. A medium is a highly specialized instrument in that he vibrates more intensely than the average man.

### *How the Medium's Vitality is Sapped*

People who employ a medium do not always realise that he should be treated with the utmost care, otherwise he may become a physical and moral wreck as the result of his mediumship.

Even when manifestations are due to good influences a medium is sometimes exhausted by the exercise of his faculty, for he must give some of his vitality before any phenomenon can be produced. This expenditure of vitality is accompanied by a certain amount of nervous agitation.

Some mediums who are robust and who in addition enjoy a tranquil, well-regulated existence free from worries about their own material affairs, may be little affected, because their circumstances allow them to recuperate. Such cases are exceptional, for many, whilst they are practising mediumship, are engaged in occupations that daily make a full demand on their energies and perhaps involve them in continual worry. Such persons should not act as mediums. They expend too much vitality, their blood becomes impoverished, their nervous system enfeebled, their strength diminished, and they are unable to replace the force they have used up.

I must add that in the majority of cases it is the experimenters who are responsible for the physical troubles that afflict mediums.

*Getting Back Strength*

For physical phenomena such as the moving of a table or some other object, the spirits are obliged to draw the necessary force, in fluid state,* from the medium. The medium is subjected to a process analogous to that of bleeding and is drained of a certain amount of his vitality, which cannot be completely restored to him, by the spirits, at the end of the seance.

But you will ask why the spirits cannot restore force to a medium? In principle they can, but in reality it is almost as complicated to give him renewed force as it is to transfuse blood from one person to another.

Firstly, the vital fluid of a medium contains elements, borrowed from his physical body, which do not exist in the etheric bodies of spirits. Secondly, to act on the physical body of a medium a spirit must have close affinity with the medium and be a capable manipulator of the fluids. That combination of qualities is rather rare, and the medium in most cases is left with his fatigue unrelieved. A good magnetiser, or in default of a magnetiser, a person healthy in body and mind and in sympathy with him, would certainly be better able to give strength to a medium than a spirit, who in most cases is himself fatigued by the effort of manifesting.

If after a seance a medium can pass a good night, and if he can rest tranquilly for some days following, he is able to make good the loss of vitality, just as a man who has been bled re-makes blood. But if he can get only a little sleep, if he must go on with his ordinary work next day, he cannot quickly re-establish his forces, and often he continues to lose vitality.

Few people care what happens to a medium after a seance. The medium himself often pays no attention to his state. He tries not to miss a sitting, in spite of physical ill-effects, either in order not to lose a fee if he is a paid medium, or not to disappoint friends if he gives his services free of charge.

*Catching An Illness*

Two dangers are incurred by a medium. The first is that he suffers a loss of vitality in a manifestation. The second is that he may receive physical maladies or moral damage from the spirits controlling him.

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* It was stated in the previous chapter that "the etheric body," an exact double of the physical body, is composed of imponderable substance in a fluid state, and that this body of a medium and also caloric, electric and gaseous elements withdrawn from him are used by a spirit seeking to appear in tangible form. The adjective "fluid" should be read as meaning "plastic" rather than "liquid." See accounts of his discoveries given by Dr. Crawford in "The Psychic Structures at the Goligher Circle," and other books.

Physical maladies have their origin in the etheric body, that is to say, the germ of an illness is developed first in the etheric before extending to the organic body.

A man carries with him to the next stage the malady which Caused his "death," and so long as he has not completely shaken off earth conditions, he may transmit that malady to a medium.

People take great precautions in dealing with cases of cholera or typhus, but nothing is done to ensure that a medium is not brought into contact with a spirit whose passing was caused by some contagious malady.

You who write had once a swiftly following congestion of the lungs through having communicated with one who "died" the day before from a lung affection. The first illness was not severe, but the germ which remained in the etheric body was stirred to renewed activity this year—you nearly paid with your life for the fault of imprudence.*

*The Recently "Dead"*

Many persons immediately on passing over are a prey to profound despair, caused by intense emotions. A sensitive medium receives a strong impression of these emotions and may be considerably shaken by them.

If there is a manifestation of that kind—and it cannot always be avoided—the medium should be disengaged† with the greatest care and obliged to rest for one or more days.

A medium may be drawn into bad habits by the spirits that control him. For instance, the spirit of a young fellow, who was dissipated and weak whilst on earth, may awake elements of passion in the medium with whom he comes into contact. If that medium has similar tendencies and is lacking in self-control, this may lead to serious results.

All mediums are not mature and finely tempered to resist corrupting influences of men and spirits. Many have little control

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* On querying this message after it had appeared in the *Weekly Despatch*, I received the following message from my Father: "It is not quite correct and yet there is a germ of truth in what is stated, but the danger is not so great as would appear from the form in which the Message has been given out. The medium has taken me rather too literally. However, as it has appeared and led to controversy, let it remain with this explanation. It is a point worth studying, for it cannot be too strongly emphasised that mediums are delicate instruments and require very careful protection. Therefore they should not be asked to ran unnecessary risks by getting into touch with the newly 'dead'."—(E. W. S.)

† It is stated that before a spirit can use the body of a medium it is necessary for him to link up (for example) his own faculties of hearing and speech with the ears and vocal chords of the medium. This operation is called "controlling the medium." When the manifestation is over, the spirit disengages himself again and the medium returns to consciousness; that is, he resumes control of his own organs.

over their impulses and are easily influenced. They are not entirely responsible for their faults and deceptions, for their natural inclinations may be stimulated by contact with faulty spirits. One might say they are victims of their mediumship. Honest and sincere at first, they gradually become depraved, embittered, and metamorphosed under the action of inferior entities of which they are the instruments.

A medium must have a strong character to repel evil suggestions, for he who is not capable of energetic reaction becomes the prey of inferior spirits.

*The Faculty of Mediumship*

The question of age has to be considered in connection with mediums. It is dangerous to practise mediumship during the Crisis of puberty, as young people at that time may lose their health or impair their mental powers for life.

The practice is equally bad for women at the critical stage of life. Priestesses and vestals of old, it will be recalled, left the temples when they had entered the forties. If the health remains good and the faculty persists, when the critical stage is passed a woman may be a better medium than she was before.

Some mediums never lose their power, others only retain it for one short period; with others, the power is intermittent. A very fine and intense mediumship may be of brief duration and not recur, or it may suffer eclipses and reappear.

Some excellent mediums, such as Swedenborg, have not developed the faculty until on the threshold of age. Certain temperaments can never become mediumistic, while others acquire or lose the faculty according to the physical or psychic changes produced in them by the passage of years.

*"I Was Once a King"*

People must therefore take into account many factors in the birth and development of mediumship. Above all, they must be serious in all their dealings with mediums. When organising seances they must realise that certain rules must be observed, frivolous appeals must not be made and ridiculous curiosity not exhibited, otherwise they are responsible for any damage that may be done.

A fine and instructive message, if it has not the signature of a well-known person, is as nothing to many people, whereas they exult if they receive one that has a well-known name at the end of it. I have the fortune to be read because W. T. Stead was a little somebody on earth, but they would not take any interest in what I write if they did not know the message was from me. I can assure them that many celebrated men are very bad spirits, with detestable influences.

If at seances people would seek only truth and light they would receive only good influences and the mediums would escape many dangers. They come too often out of curiosity or to amuse themselves with petty romances.

They hope to hear that they were kings, or princesses or other celebrities in a previous life. This tickles their pride agreeably, consoles them for a possible present insignificance and gives them an opportunity to pose before their neighbours. They do not, however, collect stories of a previous existence low and obscure in the social scale.

People often seek to get in touch with acquaintances who have passed away, merely for the sake of getting personal messages. As soon as a friend or a relation has left the earth they try to call him up on the spiritual telephone, as it were, without asking themselves whether or not that is hurtful either to the spirit or to the medium.

Do not complain, therefore, of lack of success, of disappointments, or of spoiled mediums. It is you yourselves who are responsible for failures.

When the time comes, in which the medium is surrounded by all desirable precautions, you will open wide the doors, at present almost closed, to communication between your world and ours. When you have groups of serious experimenters who are careful of their mediums and who seek above all to know the laws of the life beyond, you will not be afflicted by those ridiculous parodies that throw discredit on your doctrines.

There are many excellent mediums who have lost their faculty, their health, and sometimes their lives through the cruel ignorance of experimenters.

*How To Form A Group*

I want to give you some advice about the forming of a group. You must get together sensible, well-balanced people, who wish to experiment in a scientific way, and not to indulge in sentimentalism or to treat the problem of communications as a sort of game. A group consisting of an equal number of men and women will be found to give better results than one which consists entirely either of men or of women.

Keep away excitable enthusiasts who have not the calmness necessary for useful experiments. Keep away also the egoists who are concerned about nothing but their own affairs and are discontented if they do not get direct personal messages. These people spoil seances.

Your group should be composed of people of disinterested character, who see only in the experiments that which is of value to the whole community and not that which gives them a little personal satisfaction.

*Rules To Observe*

Having formed a group, you must fix the time and place of meeting. As far as is possible the place ought to be in quiet healthy surroundings, and the sittings should take place regularly. No one should be allowed to enter the room once a sitting is in progress. Before going to a sitting, all your personal preoccupations must be put aside. If your mind is troubled you will disturb the proceedings. You must maintain silence, and have as little private conversation as it is possible, as it hampers spirits and mediums.

Above all, be patient. Contact between the "dead" and the living is abnormal. The phenomena are unstable and almost always impossible to regulate in advance. Of ten seances you will perhaps have one that is good, two that are passable, whilst the others will be without result. Be prepared for that in advance. Discontentment and depression in those present have a deplorable effect on the spirits and on the medium.

In France, seances are often spoiled through the defects of your temperament, whereas in Great Britain we obtain good results by undertaking the work seriously. You go to sittings lightly, are easily discouraged, and then either treat the affair as a joke or abandon your efforts. In this way the best mediums are rendered useless.

Again, the British respect the authority of the leader of the group, and they observe the regulations drawn up in common agreement. But you do not pay attention to rules, you lack the spirit of accord, and you spend in discussion the time that would be better given to regular and careful experiments.

## CHAPTER VI

## GETTING TO WORK

GREAT discretion should be exercised in the choice of a medium for your group. You must, above all, make certain that his moral character is sufficiently good to make fraud or dissimulation unlikely.

There is a general feeling that mediumship is a gift and that the possessors of this gift ought to give its benefits to others freely, without thought of payment or reward. It should be taken into account, however, that, in exercising his faculty, mediums are deprived of other means of livelihood. Therefore it seems both just and natural that they should be paid.

Eloquence is a gift also, and yet you pay your barristers. A fine voice is a gift, and you give the singer a fee. The perceptions of an artist or the dexterity of a craftsman are also gifts.

"But," the objection is made, "what if I pay the medium and the seance nevertheless be unsuccessful? You pay the barrister even if you lose your case, the singer though he has performed faultily, the actor though the play is poor, the lecturer though he has made you yawn. These are the little disappointments you cannot always avoid. Mediums ought not to hesitate about taking money. They give their time, undergo fatigue, endanger health, and, if they have another occupation, lose the rest that they need.

You imagine that if you pay a medium there is more likelihood of your being deceived. This is a mistake. An honest medium will not cheat any more than an honest merchant will. A dishonest medium will cheat, even though he is not paid, simply for vainglory and vanity. It is your duty to control and criticise your medium, and to cease to employ him if he does not show himself conscientious. Personally, I have never had to regret paying a medium.

### *Necessity for Freedom from Material Care*

It is desirable that groups should make a joint effort to put every good medium in a position that will allow him to give his energies wholly to experiments. Many good mediums are not able to develop their faculty, or they lose it, because they are fully occupied with the ordinary cares of earning a living. They cannot at one and the same time give their strength to a profession and to mediumship. Either they cease to give sittings because they have no leisure to spare or their health gives way under the strain of a double fatigue, and then their mediumistic powers diminish or disappear.

You lament the slowness of the growth of spiritualism in France. You cannot spread it without the use of mediums, and you do nothing to ensure that these are available.

Many of you imagine, in all good faith, that a medium should give his services without counting the cost to himself and others—always with that idea that mediumship is a gift.

Leave aside a moment the case of a medium of independent means, or at any rate of ample leisure which he can employ for the good of the cause. The workman, the clerk, the wife, mother and housekeeper should not be expected to give their services. They have duties to their employers, their families, and to society at large. If they have homes and businesses, these must be properly looked after before mediumship is thought of. They have not the right to lessen their capacity for their ordinary work and to endanger their health by practising at the same time as medium.

If your group wishes to undertake serious experiments, either you must free your medium partly or completely from material cares, or, if your resources do not allow you to do that, you must ask for the services of one whose position is such that he has sufficient leisure to take the necessary rest after the labours of mediumship.

*Schools for Mediums*

I assure you that if spiritualist societies had in recent years founded schools of mediums and then had selected the best, for circles of study and experiment, spiritualism would by now have become a great power in the world. It is your own fault if the movement does not make rapid progress. For the study of chemistry you need a laboratory with all the necessary instruments and chemicals. You desire to obtain more complex phenomena without even troubling about the necessary apparatus or the conditions in which it can profitably be used. You grumble because you get no results. This is both unreasonable and absurd.

*The President of the Group*

After the formation of the group is complete and a suitable medium has been chosen, you begin to experiment with him. Do not at once reject him if he does not give you satisfaction. Several sittings may be held before convincing results are obtained, for it is necessary to feel one's way in these experiments.

Whenever possible, it is well to have more than one medium in a group. This will be found to be an invaluable help in checking the results obtained.

The arrangement of the sitters in a group plays a most important part in the seance. It is often necessary, during the

first few sessions of a newly-formed group, to change the places of the sitters until a satisfactory arrangement is reached.

It is the duty of the president, who should be a person of authority, able to keep order and promote concord, to settle this, after he has asked the advice of the mediums. The room should be well aired and kept at the temperature which best suits the medium. The conditions affecting each medium should be specially noted.

A good president can render invaluable services. He may, by his firmness and energy, prevent malevolent spirits from taking possession of the medium, or at least he may limit their influence. Mediums, with far-reaching auras, are almost completely free from troubled or ill-intentioned spirits, but those whose auras are permeable, and who are easily influenced, require to be carefully watched by the president.

The president should be chosen with great care. He must be a man of discernment, his acquaintance with the conditions enabling him to put suitable questions, then he will obtain good results, if, once he is appointed, the sitters accept his guidance.

*How to Terminate a Seance*

At the end of a sitting, or after any difficult manifestation, the medium should be disengaged with care. "Intuitive" mediums with far-reaching auras gather hardly any hurtful fluids, but none the less energetic passes are necessary to disengage the head, which is always more or less congested, and to calm the general nervous excitation. The medium will tell you that he feels all right and that he is not fatigued. Disengage him nevertheless. Possibly he does not, at the moment, realise the extent of his fatigue, for be is, as it were, anaesthetised; but, unless this is done, he will not be able to sleep when he reaches home, and next day he will feel depressed, with his nerves on edge.

In the case of a more "direct" medium, carefully disengage the organ concerned in the production of a phenomenon. When there have been movements of a table, disengage the arms and particularly the solar plexus. If the medium has given out much vitality it will be necessary to re-charge the plexus. The eyes of the clairvoyant and the ears of the clairaudient should be disengaged with great care. A very energetic disengaging is necessary in the case of a materialising, medium.

After a difficult materialisation, a medium should bathe in salt water, hot or cold. Every medium before sitting ought to take a bath. It would be advisable, also, by means of a few passes, to disengage the medium from the influences he may have gathered among crowds on his way to the sitting—influences which might hamper him.

*System to Follow*

Take, for example, a group in which there are three mediums. The first is a writer who, by means of automatic writing, may receive long moral, scientific, or philosophical dissertations. The second is a trance medium, through whom the manifestations will be more restricted than the first, but more positive. The third is clairvoyant, and can be used to check the results of the others.

The president should arrange with the members of the group the work to give each medium. For the writer, a series of questions should be prepared to which an answer is sought, either by getting into touch with a certain spirit agreed upon or by leaving the choice of a communicator to the other side. A group ought to seek a spirit guide, as the control of an advanced spirit, if it can be obtained, is an excellent thing.

While the first medium writes, the trance medium is controlled by spirits wishing to get into touch with members of the group. As far as possible, the president must endeavour to keep the manifestations in relation with the subject of study for that evening or series of evenings. If an unknown spirit manifests he must watch the manifestation closely, in order to stop it if it becomes risky for the medium.

The third medium should be asked to check the phenomena, so far as his faculty for seeing enables him. A group ought to draw up a programme of studies, for by so doing they will help the spirit communicators.

*Right Questions to Ask*

The aim of the group should not be merely to seek friendly manifestations by some of the departed, known to its members, or to obtain proofs of the identity of the various communicators. The members must work and ask the spirits to work with them, otherwise the manifestations simply go round and round the same circle, and a succession of banalities is the result.

If the group wishes to solve a complex problem, for example, the problem of the different stages by which, at death, a spirit is freed from his earth body and from earth conditions generally, the following course may be pursued.

A series of messages, describing the different stages, may be sought through the writing medium. Many interesting communications may be obtained showing how the release is affected, e.g. in the case of a man who was killed suddenly, an old man or one whose passing was Caused by illness.

At the same time, through the second (trance) medium you ask each freed spirit who manifests what was the manner of his death and how he was freed from his body. If the spirit is earthbound (i.e. one who has not completely cast off earth

conditions) certain conclusions may be drawn from the manner in which he manifests.

The third medium, the clairvoyant, can check the results obtained by the other two mediums. If there are obscurities or contradictions, these will provide you with material for new questions. A surprising amount of instruction will be gained by following a systematic plan.

*How to Prepare for Sittings*

Few groups follow this method at present. They confine themselves to little intimate manifestations, not always by advanced spirits. These console the bereaved, but they are insufficient, as they lead neither to progress in knowledge nor to the development of the medium. Lack of culture, in the group and in the medium himself, is often an obstacle in the way of progress. People of uncultivated minds have scarcely any desire for other than familiar commonplaces in the communications. Very often they reject instructive messages because they do not understand them or because they run counter to their preconceived ideas. This laziness of mind is often encountered in those whose social status would lead one to suppose that they are cultivated people, but on whose minds, it is found, study has left only a superficial impression.

A group may be few in number, but every member should be resolved to study earnestly the mysteries of the After-Life. A slack-minded member always hinders progress.

An excellent preparation for sittings is to study a given subject, either by means of lectures or by private meditation. Before commencing the actual sitting, one member of the group should give a short *causerie** on the subject and each other member be called upon to give his opinion. For a sitting of two and a half hours, three-quarters of an hour of preliminary discussion—discussion, not dispute—will have a good effect not only on the minds of members, but in attracting the attention of advanced spirits.

For sittings devoted to materialisations, liftings, and the like, this form of mental preparation is not needed. These sittings, regarded only from a philosophical standpoint, are not very instructive. Much, however, can be learnt from them if they are undertaken with a medium who allows everything to be rigorously tested.

Spiritualism would benefit greatly if all manifestations were subjected to tests, and its development would no longer be retarded by grotesque seances or disheartening messages.

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* I should like to emphasise here that this seems to be the French method of interpreting what my Father always insisted upon, namely, that people attending seances should know something about the nature of the phenomena to be expected and should have read certain books on spiritualism—(E. W. S.)

## CHAPTER VII

## TARGET MEN

MEDIUMSHIP to one exercising it is more a source of trial than of happiness, therefore reflect well before you take any steps to develop your mediumship. A medium is hypersensitive. He is more exposed than ordinary people to disagreeable sensations coming from the earth or the spirit world, is more easily affected by changes of the weather or variations in earth magnetism, and is subject to physical discomforts of which non-mediums know nothing. He is an invalid compared to normal people who have good health.

It is a false notion to imagine that a medium is a privileged being, surrounded as he goes through life by genii who protect him from all dangers.

He is a target for dark spirits who seek to prevent the spread of light. These malevolent creatures endeavour to stir up a thousand difficulties around him, to embroil him with friends and neighbours, to cause him loss of money, to thwart him in his ordinary profession, and to inflict illness on him.

The best and purest mediums draw evil influences towards them, even as the conductor attracts the lightning. That was true also of the saints of the churches. It was to guard against the dangers accompanying mediumship that churches forbade attempts to communicate with those who had passed on. In ancient civilisations, for the same reason, the practice was surrounded by defensive ceremonies.

Happily, the medium has guides to protect him, for without them he would soon be mad or dead. Although the guides fight for him, even with their goodwill they cannot ward off or soften all the blows.

If the medium is of a high moral standard, his persecutors will try to hurt him through his entourage, by provoking continual vexations in his social life. If the medium is less moral and of a more material type they will strike directly at him, seeking to push him to various excesses, such as drinking or gambling.

A study of the lives of well-known mediums will furnish illustrations of this, and show how many of them have been sorely tested both morally and physically! Among the crowd of less known mediums you will find many examples.

*Development of Mediumship*

As long as the present haphazard conditions prevail, it will be a trying task to be a medium. His faculty should be taken

care of and should not be developed without system or sense. Mediums are made to experiment in unfavourable circumstances. No one seeks to aid them to resist the attacks made on their Physical and moral well-being, or to preserve them from obsessions and cerebral disorders. People do not trouble about what happens to the medium, provided they are entertained.

Mediumship should not be developed excepting in persons of a sane mind and vigorous character, who will know haw to resist perverse suggestions and to prevent alien entities from controlling them. Mediumistic development in persons of feeble will and unstable morality opens the way to dangers, for they become the playthings of bad influences. It would be very different if mediums were withdrawn from ordinary life and sustained by priests, versed in the nature of the forces brought into play, who might create protective influences around them.

A medium of strong personality not only incurs less risk and has more power to repulse those who would seek to play tricks with him, but he also undergoes trials with more courage and without becoming embittered or ill-tempered. Mediums are sometimes exceptionally ill-tempered and irritable, susceptible to slights, aggresive in demeanour and sometimes extremely jealous of other mediums. That is because they do not know how to rid themselves of the pernicious influences that cling to them.

*Need of Warning Notices*

It is good at this juncture to sum up the precautions that, if taken, will diminish the risks run by mediums. The sitting must be held under good conditions, and the medium in a state of good health and mental equilibrium. Carefully thought out rules must be observed by the sitters and the medium thoroughly disengaged after the experiments.

The psychic influences of the members of a group may be efficacious in neutralising the action of malevolent spirits and reinforcing the power of the medium's guides.

Let us take an example. The medium may be troubled by the hostility of a near relative, and this hostility is further excited by malevolent spirits. The guide alone is unable to intervene in his favour, but if the group, by their sympathy create a favourable atmosphere around the medium, the guide will have a vantage ground from which to act on the spirit who torments the medium. In such a case the psychic forces emanating from the incarnate are more powerful than those emanating from the discarnate, as the former have in them more earthly elements.

I know there are some people who try to help the mediums, but they are few in number and widely dispersed. That there are not more is due, I think, to the prevalence of the idea that a medium is a privileged being because be is in touch with spirits.

The same warning notice might be put over the doors of seance rooms as over live electric wires. Electricity can be made of good service, but we must know how to employ it. The same is true of psychic forces. When mediums, after having been selected and trained in schools, are given harmonious conditions and surroundings in which to carry on their psychic work, then there will not be risks in the practice of mediumship.

*Bad Effects of Towns*

The medium himself should do something to diminish the risks he may incur. He should develop his will-power, in order to be able to repel suggestions that would lead him astray; his intelligence, in order to understand and subject to critical examination the phenomena he receives; his sympathies that he may not be limited by self-interest.

He should lead as normal a life as possible and give an example of good behaviour, diligence and courage. He should be careful of the company he keeps, admitting to his intimacy only those of good character—bad characters bring with them bad influences, which attach themselves to a medium without his knowing it.

He ought, if possible, to live in a house that gets a great deal of sunshine, for the sun chases away malevolent spirits. His house ought to be furnished simply and harmoniously, not necessarily in a costly fashion.

His diet ought to be temperate, but suited to his individual peculiarities. He should take little alcohol and meat, but plenty of fruit and vegetables, although complete vegetarianism does not suit all mediums. He should not drink tea or coffee to excess, and in no case should he have recourse to drugs, as these are extremely dangerous.

If opportunity offers, he should live in the country. Wooded or hilly country is favourable to mediumship, but the sea or mountainous country does not suit all mediums.

Life in big towns is unsuitable for mediums. Phenomena are more difficult to obtain in such cities as London and Paris than in country surroundings. Mediums are more easily depressed and more easily over-stimulated in towns. This is particularly the case in the crowded conditions prevailing in large cities.

Every medium who lives in a big town ought to go frequently to the country for fresh air cures and if possible he should spend much of his time walking in the woods. It has been found that the influences emanating from woods are excellent for highly-strung people and restorative for psychic qualities.

*Moral Hygiene*

A medium should seek to attain serenity of soul. All violent feelings, fear, despair, or anger, send out waves which repel the spirits and re-act with bad effect on the physical body. The

serene of soul enter into touch with elevated spirits, while the violently tormented attract spirits animated by ardent passions or regrets and disturbed by troubles of all sorts. The action of these is malevolent and exhausting.

In endeavouring to develop his faculty a medium should not put himself in the hands of one ignorant of the subject, but should seek guidance from an experienced investigator who is prudent and knows how to guard against risks. The sittings should be of short duration and cease as soon as any fatigue is felt. He should break off when he receives a communication either incoherent or coarse. Until he is master of his powers he should never attempt to exercise them when alone. He should also seek to obtain a guide on the other side. There are startling phenomena, nervous crises, catalepsies, and possessions which can only be conjured away by an adept. These frighten the uninstructed, and that is why the novice should not experiment until he is sure of his powers, as the risk is too great.

*Hypnotism of Names*

Having developed his faculty, the medium should subject all the communications he receives to severe scrutiny. He must not allow himself to be hypnotised by big names. Ninety-nine times out of a hundred the imposing signatures received are false. They are, as it were, false visiting cards used by unknown spirits to obtain entrance to a circle. He should be on his guard against being led astray by flattery. There is always some tempter ready to suggest to a medium that the world has been waiting for him to save it. A real guide, if he mentions it at all, will speak of the mission of his medium in moderate terms, for there are many mediums and each has only a tiny furrow to trace in an immense field.

A good medium will be prompt to criticise, and win like to hear others criticise the messages he receives or the phenomena he helps to produce. Anyone who is offended by criticism and who refuses to submit to severely controlled tests should be suspected, either of bad faith or of unhealthy spirit influences.

A medium, after all, is only an intermediary. He should not make it a matter of *amour propre* [vanity] to defend productions which are not those of his own personality. He should welcome criticisms, for they help him to know the extent of his powers, and thus to obtain control of them. A true medium, subject to good influences, is never jealous of other medium or anxious to claim superior powers. On the contrary, he should endeavour to find his proper level by sharing and comparing experiences with others. Jealousy is always an indication that some bad influences are at work.

A medium must not resort to magic to increase his powers.

Certain occult forces which do not belong to the earth plane recoil with terrible force on those who imprudently invoke them.

It is terribly disconcerting when a medium who has given you real phenomena is caught in the act of cheating, and continues his tricks even after he has been exposed. You know the medium to be an honest man in private life, and you cannot understand why he should now be dishonest. His lapses are due either to unconscious mind-suggestion of the other sitters or to ineffective control by spirits.

Suppose the medium is in a semi-trance. Whilst he awaits the action of the spirits he is in a passive, receptive state, and his faculties being already partly withdrawn from his control, he is almost unable to check his acts. If the period of inaction and expectation be prolonged, the impatience of the sitters acts upon the medium, causing him to feel an overpowering desire to trick, to which in the end he may succumb.

In some cases fraud is due to ineffective control by the spirits. A spirit who wishes to produce a phenomenon ought to be in close touch with the medium and completely within his aura; for example, he may seek, by poor yet apparent trickery, to produce some phenomenon that his guide wishes to achieve by spirit agency. If the spirit does not closely control his medium, the latter, by a reflex action, will try to execute the project of his guide, and he will do this unconsciously and openly.

*Charlatans and Honest Men*

Every materialising medium, in order to produce material phenomena, abandons the control of his acts, his conscience is momentarily decentralised, and he becomes the impulsive plaything of the psychic forces which are intercrossing each other.

It would be a good thing if, at materialising seances, the members of the group concentrated to send out strong thought suggestions to the medium, thus strengthening his will and enabling him to resist the desire to cheat. The president of the group should see that this is done. He ought to exercise authority over the medium, and only allow him to sit under conditions which make trickery impossible. He should not hesitate to bind the medium to his seat or to tie his hands and feet, and, if necessary, to shut him in a wooden cabinet. Do not judge a medium too hastily, and remember that, though fraud may occur, he is not always guilty.

His acquiescence to morbid suggestions, however, is an indication that his will is feeble. This feebleness of will is frequent in mediums and somnambulists, and it is very often a consequence of his physical and astral composition, which requires to be plastic and passive to be malleable by occult forces. Even in the case of mediums whose mind and character are

energetic and robust, you will notice a feebleness of physique which hampers them in the ordinary struggle for life.

It is well to be on your guard and to accept nothing without testing it in such a way as to dispel all suspicion. Beware of charlatan mediums, and exercise caution with honest mediums. Make unconscious fraud impossible by taking the most rigorous precautions, for some people may acquire a genius for ruses and deceit.

## CHAPTER VIII

## HOME SITTINGS

AFTER a group has been formed of carefully selected members, it is, as a rule, inadvisable to admit non-members to a sitting. This, however, is not a hard and fast rule. It is a good thing to allow others to attend from time to time and also occasionally to hold home circles.

The group ought not to admit a non-member without knowing that the visitor is a person who, whether or not a believer in the reality of the phenomena, has come to investigate and not to mock. An open-minded visitor who, for the evening, complies with the rules, cannot harm either mediums or spirits.

It is different with farceurs who come with the intention of making a game of everything and who seek only to criticise that which they do not wish to understand. They should be excluded, for they may play some silly trick that would be dangerous to the medium.

If it is decided to open a propaganda group—one to which the uninitiated are invited—a powerful and experienced medium should be chosen. The medium ought always to be assisted by the president of the seance, and if the new group is large, by several others versed in the work. If only a small number is invited, the president will be sufficient.

*Introduction of Non-Members*

The president and the medium should have their fixed places, and the objects used by the medium (table, chair, planchette, etc.) should, as far as possible, be the same. The president should exercise complete control over the gathering, preventing any talking and whispering. At the beginning and during the sitting he should give any explanations and commentaries that he judges to be necessary for an understanding of the phenomena. He should watch the medium closely and disengage him frequently.

It is a good thing to begin with a prayer, a hymn, or the playing of a piece of music. The temperature of the room should be kept even. Too much warmth causes congestion in the medium, cold is equally bad, and a stuffy atmosphere fatigues. Those present should not be crowded near the medium, who ought only to be in contact with the president, except in cases where it is necessary to make a chain.

It is a mistake to admit to a sitting, people who have no

notion of spirit phenomena. They should be given a little preliminary instruction at *causeries* or lectures. They should be warned beforehand of the kind of phenomena which are produced through the medium. For lack of preliminary explanation, many people at a first sitting either consider the phenomena useless or are frightened by them, whereas, had they been prepared for what they were to expect, they would have been interested.

The medium should be carefully disengaged after the sitting and, if necessary, given something to eat or to drink. Certain phenomena are very exhausting, and it is then absolutely necessary that the medium should take some restorative.

The sitting should be closed, as it began, with a prayer, a hymn, or the playing of music. If the sitting has been troubled or stormy, this restores harmony in the group.

At such a propaganda sitting the mediums should be well able to disentangle themselves from the new and strange influences brought by the non-members.

*Risks in Private Circles*

In home circles, consisting of little reunions of families or friends, certain advantages are gained, for in these experiments the persons gathered together are in sympathy and can easily be brought into harmony on the subject of the evening.

If the people participating have had some acquaintance with spirit phenomena and the medium is experienced, conditions will be favourable, and there is not much to fear. Unfortunately, many of these private experiments are either not under serious control or are undertaken by people who have only vague notions about the subject. These people think that experience is unnecessary and that the reading of a few books on spiritualism is sufficient equipment to enable them to conduct a seance. That is like trying some experiments in chemistry after having read a little manual, but without having studied in a laboratory.

Some groups are formed for amusement, while others are formed with the idea that the spirits are like genii of fairy tales, and that the table, like Aladdin's lamp, can work miracles. If the group contains credulous, uncontrolled and excitable people, whose decisions for every course of action are made dependent on table-rappings or planchette messages, not only is the free-will annihilated, but obsessions, nerve exhaustion and mental disorders may follow and the results will be very serious. The danger of such proceedings or the consequences that may ensue cannot be too strongly emphasized.

*The Limitation of Man's Mind*

It may be deduced that groups which are hostile to courteous criticism and discussion, or who refuse to examine theories or doctrines, which appear contrary to the teaching of their guides, are under the influence of an inferior type of spirit. Students of

the conditions of the future life, consciously or unconsciously, are inclined to be conceited, and are apt to believe that they have a monopoly of the truth.

It cannot be stated too strongly that no school of thought—occult, spiritualist or theosophic—possesses the truth. Each has gained elements of the truth, but none the whole truth. The spirits themselves who manifest can only give portions of the truth, and those who could give more complete instructions are often prevented from doing so by the preconceived ideas of the medium or the others present with him.

Owing to the limitation of man's mind, the whole truth would not be understood even if it could be revealed by the spirits. If the mind of man were more intelligent and receptive to new ideas, Spiritualism would progress more quickly. Apparently intelligent people are sometimes found incapable of accepting new ideas, for example, M. Theirs (historian and first President of the Third French Republic), though an intelligent man, could not believe that steam trains were possible.

*Big Sounding Names*

If a medium is not well balanced, he is apt to isolate himself from his fellows and imagine that he has been chosen to do some great work and is one of the elect. This is a form of obsession which, if not checked, may lead to madness.

Every message must be judged by its contents and not by the name affixed to it. A common-place message signed by an illustrious name discredits Spiritualism more than an authentic message of high value exalts it.

It does not follow that men become great spirits because they held high positions on earth, for sometimes, by their egoism and pride they neglected their spiritual development. Therefore a man who wrote much-admired verse or turned fine phrases while on earth, may after his "death" become a spirit of low order and be totally unfit to give instruction in great truth. All desire to communicate with many celebrities would cease if people on earth realised their present miserable state. Instead of looking up to them, they would either be frightened by them or pity them.

Do not trust blindly big-sounding names, but judge the tree by its fruit. A man who was an honest, decent workman may be more able to give instruction than a famous writer of superior knowledge and yet of inferior spiritual development.

In seeking a guide avoid celebrities of whose spirituality nothing is known and seek rather one who, although less famed, has a high moral standard. Such a guide will give wise counsel and attract good influences.

*People Who Do Harm*

Spiritualists themselves do more harm to their cause than do its detractors. Its opponents may be convinced by reasonable arguments, but little can be done with people who organize sittings with convulsive or hysterical medium, who tell you that Shakespeare is their guide. They ascribe to him abominable productions without form or sense, and tell of marvellous phenomena that exist only in their imagination.

There are many such groups in Paris. They swarm in the city, casting on the doctrines of the continued life a discredit that the finest investigations do not efface.

Spiritualism in France—that has to be said and reiterated in order to cauterise the wound—has remained stationary, either because its followers have shown a lack of serious, persevering study, or because little cliques have been formed that cling obstinately and unintelligently to their own particular dogmas. There is in many spiritualists, theosophists, occultists, as much bigotry as there was in Papist or Huguenot in the wars of religion in France.

*Labels Versus Facts*

Many imagine that the fact of belonging to some school of occultism confers on them a great moral and intellectual superiority to the remainder of humanity and that they are infallible in their doctrines. They fail to see that all orthodoxy is a dead thing and that they are mummifying their beliefs, just as much as the followers of the cults at which they jeer.

Advanced spirits judge directly the value of a man by the radiance more or less brilliant of his peri-spirit. The mere title of spiritualist or theosophist does not necessarily add anything to the spiritual value of anyone, incarnate or discarnate.

It is a great mistake to imagine that the state of advancement of a man is marked by his creed. There are materialists, and atheists who are admirable souls, fervent protestants and sincere Catholics who are very advanced spirits, while many spiritualists and theosophists are far behind in the scale of evolution. The label does not make the contents of the bottle. It is not the creeds, but the acts and the moral virtues that place men. There are certain poor workmen whose spiritual development is greatly in advance of that of some eminent scientists, authors, and even psychic researchers.

If Spiritualism makes a man better, more meditative, more charitable and more tolerant, and gives him a wider comprehension of his duties, then you may truly say that he is learning its lessons; but if it leaves him sectarian, egotistic and presumptuous, then you may be sure he understands Spiritualism no more than a bigot understands Christianity.

*Spirits Learning Like Men*

The great occult traditions are not lost and never can be, but they are rendered incomprehensible to the mind by the present type of education.

Spiritualism is not a new religion. There is only one religion. Its doctrines are "re-edited" about every two thousand years, when the old text ceases to be comprehensible. All the truths there are in Spiritualism are in the Scriptures, and they were in the bodies of doctrine delivered before the Scriptures were written.

Eternal truths are to-day being re-edited. Spiritualists have no cause for self-conceit, for they are not going to renew the world by supernatural doctrines.

Any medium who thinks he is a Messiah is either misguided or mad. Any spirit who pretends to convey infallible truths is ignorant or is a humbug trying to fool those with whom he comes into contact. A spirit can teach only what he knows himself, and man can only understand in proportion to his intelligence.

## CHAPTER IX

## "IN MY FATHER'S HOUSE ARE MANY MANSIONS"

To a casual observer, the sketches of the spirit world already given may appear very discouraging.

Many spiritualists still picture to themselves a spiritual world all shining with light, even though they have had considerable experience and have seen the greater part of their sittings spoiled by uneasy spirits.

The following passage occurs in Ecclesiastes:—"ln the place where the tree falleth there it shall be." Death is only the severing of the cord that attaches the spirit to its earth body. The spirit itself remains unchanged and is at the stage of development to which the man has attained during his earth life.

Death proves to him only the continuity of his existence and his adjustment to a state of spiritual life in harmony with his qualities and defects. It does not take away from him any of his vices, nor add to his virtues. Christ said: "In My Father's house are many mansions"—that is to say, as many spiritual regions as there are states of soul.

That is why, in communications, the descriptions of the next state vary to such an extent, for a man gravitates to the sphere for which he has fitted himself during earth life. Some spirits describe only mediocre dwellings. There are the mediocre souls who, having no desire for spirituality, see only the material side of existence; therefore, a semi-material astral life is the only one possible for them. On the other hand, those who are spiritually developed are almost unable to describe their surroundings.

Moral sufferings, and often physical pain, are felt by evil souls, who suffer terribly. The drunkards and the sensually indulgent suffer physically in their astral body. The avaricious, the proud, the hypocritical suffer in their soul. The egoist remains for long lost in an icy fog that isolates him from other creatures.

Man should free himself of egoism, be tolerant and charitable, cultivate his intelligence if he has the opportunity but above all he should do the work that falls to his lot as well as he can even if his work is sweeping the streets. More progress can be made by doing little things well than by doing big things badly.

If men were better, more occupied with their souls and less with material interests, they would have greater possibilities of spiritual progression when they pass into another world, and they would rapidly become happy spirits.

*In the Desolate Zones*

Unfortunately, however, there are many who pass from earth after having lived lives of indifference to all that is noble, pure and disinterested.

Men who have stupefied and brutalised themselves with drink, have ill-treated their wives and children, have sacrificed everything to vice.

The selfish, who have never considered that fortune was given to them to serve their fellows, and who have only employed their money to serve their passions.

And the debauched, who have wallowed in the lowest pleasures of the senses.

And the hypocrites, who have put on the mask of virtue the better to deceive.

And the coquette, who has only built an altar to her own body to adore it.

How many of these, and of others, go every day into the next world wrapped in the livid shroud of their egoism and errors? They are legion, these unhappy souls, who are bound for a time, through their earthly actions, to be miserable wandering spirits. If I have laid stress on the fact that there are these innumerable desolate shadows it is because they are a terrible hindrance to the manifestations at seances, which they distort by their malice or their ignorance, or simply by the avidity with which they seek the sensations that recall their earth life to them.

Above that desolate zone spread the happy regions of the spiritual life. Men would live better lives if they were convinced of that marvellous after-life which awaits the upright man.

*Truth at Cost of Theories*

To bring that saving conviction to men, Spiritualism must be developed and propagated intelligently, the practice of mediumship must be improved, false mediums exposed, groups made more free and healthy, and the clumsy vagaries avoided that keep away so many sober-minded people who otherwise would become fervent spiritualists.

At all times seek the truth even at the expense of cherished theories Be a courteous adversary, respect sincere convictions, and do not attack the religious convictions of others. To harp persistently on the alleged delinquencies of priests and pastors is often to show you the mote in your neighbour's eye but not the beam in your own. A real spiritualist, seeing clearly the value of the monuments bequeathed us by the Past, does not attack any religion, for he realises that this is both stupid and useless.

A spiritualist worthy of the name does not seek to show by sterile controversies the value of the doctrines he upholds. He lives according to them. Only his deeds are fruitful. Passionate discussions and violent attacks repulse others; but the example of a fine life of charity and of tolerance attracts them.

## FAREWELL

I have finished my Messages. I hope they will be readable in spite of my bad French and in spite of the troubled state of the psychic atmosphere of our poor earth. (Note: This was received in the first year of the war.)

I have said, in all simplicity of heart, a little brusquely and harshly, that which I believe to be good for you. I sincerely desire to give you a little help, and I do hope to do better if you ask me and if you put the questions to me. There are so many things to say!

I thank my medium. This has been for her a real sacrifice of time and a real fatigue. I thank her on my own behalf and on behalf of those who may find pleasure in reading these lines. For to her I am only a dotard compared to certain of her guides who are more learned than I am and who have already given her many fine lessons. I am very grateful for her good-will and I hope that those whom I have interested will realise their obligation to her for having spent so many hours blackening paper without pleasure to herself and in place of enjoying more agreeably her hours of liberty and repose.